

CCH Publications You May Not Know About May 18

The Center for Cryptologic History (CCH) has issued a great number of publications since it was established in 1989. Unclassified editions are available on NSA.gov.

We thought it would be interesting each month to highlight one of our publications that you don't know you want—yet.

The first CCH publication produced under its own imprint was *The Origins of the National Security Agency*, by Thomas L. Burns, issued in 1990, soon after the CCH had been established. This was a classified study of the rather complicated evolution (and sometimes devolution) of the administration of cryptology from the 1940s to the establishment of NSA in 1952. *Origins* was based on a thorough analysis of documents, and was as good as any academic study published by a university press.



Tom Burns presenting "Copy No. 1" of his book to the director, Admiral William Studeman, at the 1991 Symposium on Cryptologic History.

The author, Tom Burns, was a “re-employed annuitant” --- the 1990s version of today's SARs. He had spent many years in NSA's policy office, and had an uncanny feel for how organizations operate and how they change. He knew, and liked to study, organizational behavior.

In 1990, the CCH had word processing equipment that already was museum-worthy. This meant that although *Origins* had good substance, its look was old-fashioned from the start. Around the turn of the millennium, the CCH began reissuing its early publications with a more modern look and better graphics; *Origins* was a good candidate for this process.

By that time, there had been considerable declassification, and the senior editor found that, by redacting just a few paragraphs, the book could be reissued as unclassified. Thus, in 2005, it came out as *The Quest for Cryptologic Centralization and the Establishment of NSA: 1940-1952*. The ruling was that we could not have both a classified and unclassified publication with the same name, so some supervisor hung the most unwieldy title in our inventory on us.

By either name, the story is not pretty, although, to make up for it, the story is complicated. NSA's early background is littered with failed attempts to find the right structure to maximize America's cryptologic effort. But, it is an important body of knowledge for those who want to understand how we came to be and why we are the way we are.

502 caption: Tom Burns shaking hands with the DIRNSA, Admiral Studeman, and giving him a copy of the book.